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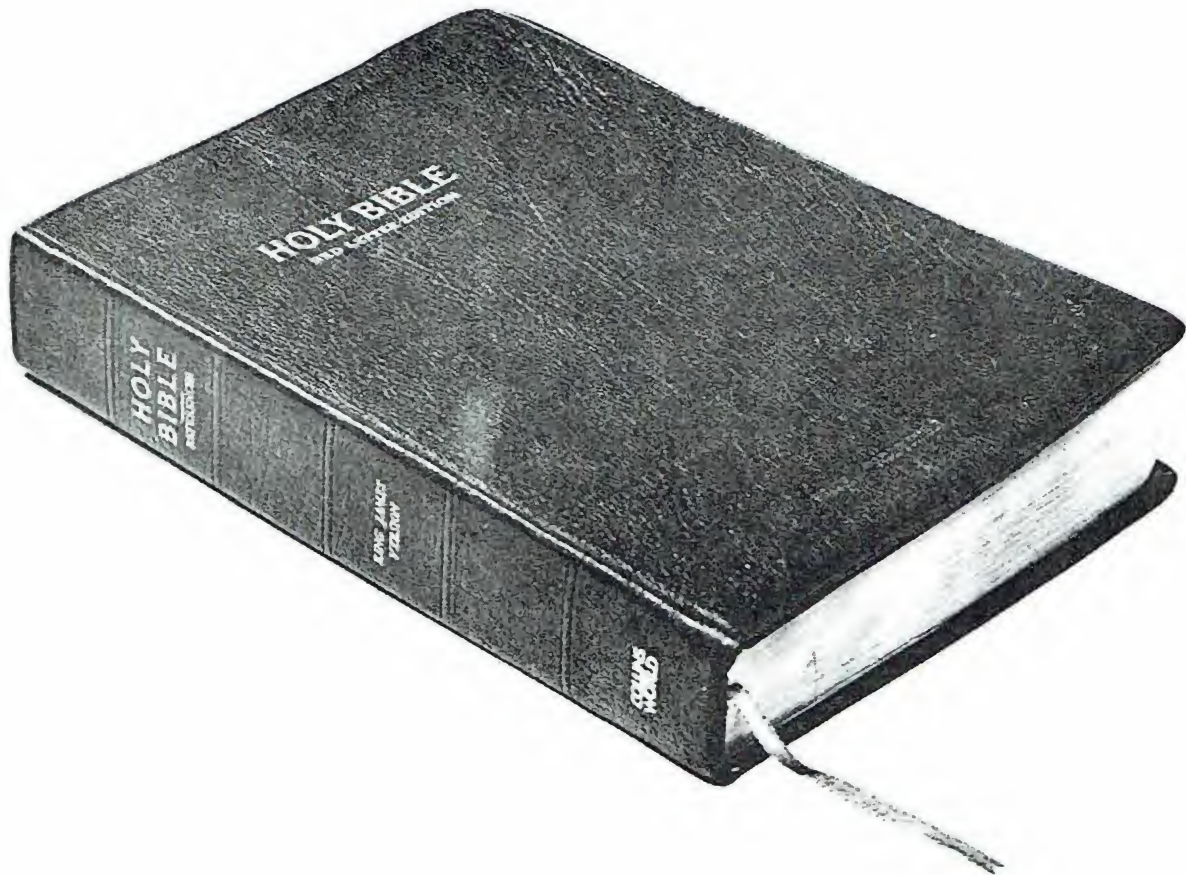
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Degree 8 - 9

THE MAYANS
SAN ANTONIO,
TEXAS

Number 191

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And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

John 20; 30 - 31

SEVEN FACETS OF THE BIBLE REVELATION NUMBER 191

A PICTURE OF THE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE OF MANKIND

The Road to Now
The Laboratory Test
Along the Way
Some Laws of Life

History Plays its Part
The Nature of Progress
Prove All Things
Affirmation

BELOVED CENTURION:

The title of this lesson, as you can see, is A PICTURE OF THE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE OF MANKIND. Perhaps it should have been called PROGRESS because really that is what it is. Progress - the onward stride to God. All growth that is not toward God is growing to decay.

Many times, I am sure, you have heard someone say, "Forget the past; don't think about it. It is gone and should be forgotten. Think only of today and of the future." People are prone to say this, but it is a false idea. The past is of vast importance in your future life and what you will do with the future.

If it were not for the past you would not know the causes and effects of certain happenings in this life. The past can surely be a guide.

I, personally, believe that the history of the world is given to us in the Bible, which is the best book of prophecy one could have. No one could prophesy more clearly for you what you ought to do when problems arise in your life, but you must read it and learn to understand the hidden meanings. So I want to say again, do not forget the past, its failures and its successes. Remember them and mark them well, so that you may steer your life boat accordingly.

I do not mean by this that you should DWELL on what has happened in the past. If it has been unsuccessful and filled with sorrow, keep it in the back of your mind, but do not allow the past to rob you of your forward march toward better things. Do not hug the past to your breast as so many people do and allow it to defeat you and cause you to have a "What's the use?" outlook on life. This attitude will rob you of your ability to think constructively and make of your life what you want it to be.

One who has a great interest in archaeology, which your instructor has and as many of our members have, knows the importance of what the past has meant to the present, up to now, the day in which we are living.

The grandest of all laws is the Law of Progressive Development. It is the law of the Universe. Men grow wiser as they grow older and societies become better.

Getting back to archaeology for a moment, and the Mayan temples, we think of how slowly society moves toward civilization. But, when we compare civilizations of half a century, or even a quarter of a century apart, we see many signs of what great progress is made. As civilization goes forward, we, as individuals, also go forward. This is the reason it is so important that you, as a member of the Mayan Order, take your studies very seriously. Make every day a day in which some improvement is made in your life. Maybe it is only a small improvement, but something which shows progress.

I want to admonish you again to use your Bible in this series and your character will grow as a result of it. Your life will be richer for it. You will be better able to solve the problems of everyday life. You will be happier and you

will progress.

The following prayer will help to strengthen your efforts to accomplish this.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, as all my forerunners have done before me, I must find my way through the life of my generation, making it a march of victory and discovery of Thee and Thy truth. Help me that it may be so. Amen.



A PICTURE OF THE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE OF MANKIND

PART I - THE ROAD TO NOW

THE road we have traveled to this point of experience is memory. The road ahead is prospect. The first is certainty, the second possibility. The way of the yesterdays has been one of trial and error. It has established some things we can depend on, so we may make fewer mistakes on the road ahead. The Bible is a log of the past, written especially to show men how to make and keep life good.

The mariner's chart is based on voyages already made by the voyagers of yesterday. By its aid we of today can avoid the rocks and shoals, and keep to the open channels, if we will. The modern highway is a product of the experience of our pioneering travelers. Beginning with the breaking of a trail, it was developed at great pain and cost, so that by its help the traveler of today may travel safely and quickly if he will avail himself of past experience.

The pioneers of our race built the beginnings of the road of life over which we have come thus far. One generation after another has improved on the experience of others by the lessons they learned. In our time we should make much more of life by using this log book of the past, and thereby keep coming nearer to the goal of God's purpose for us and for the ages.

History is the story of the general experience of humanity. The Bible is the story of the spiritual phases of that experience. More of that later. Let us now think of it only as the instructive record of a journey.

It was a wiser Israel that marched over the Jordan into Canaan than the one that set out from Egypt long before. The winding road through the wilderness had brought the tribes to a place where they could begin to apply what they had learned. They were prepared, if they would, to make the next chapter of the story one of

national and spiritual development.

There would be many times when the tribesmen would forget what they had learned but there would be many more when they would stop and think, and thereby avoid some mistakes they were about to make, and would have made had it not been for some lesson they or their fathers had learned from some experience of those desert years. The course of the ages has always been profoundly affected by the pathfinders. The future will always have the advantage of the experiences we have.

It has taken hard work and great patience and sacrifice to build the road to now. It is a free gift to us from the hand of the past, and we cannot afford to disregard it. We can build only on a foundation already laid and add only to a road already built, using, let us hope, the benefit of the experience gained by others who came this way before us.

The forward look is supremely important, but it may be made safer by an occasional backward glance in the rear-vision mirror.

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PART II - THE LABORATORY TEST

THE laboratory test is what determines the real truth about any question whether of science, belief, or practice. We are applying it in everything we do, and we should watch all results very carefully in order to know whether to try again or abandon the project. If we need the answer to any problem, we have only to put it to the test of actual living and get the ruling of experience.

The important question about any given value is whether it is permanently good. What we want to know about any course of action is, will it result in good, evil, or nothing? What we want to know about a philosophy of life is, will it develop sound character, bring about desirable results, and make for true happiness?

There are countless such questions, and we find ourselves confronted by one or another of them all the time. We could never give all of them enough attention to find the answers, nor hope that all the answers we do find would be right.

In the Bible, however, we have a great case book showing how other people have done in such matters, the ways they have chosen, and how it worked out. From remote ages these records have been preserved for our use.

He is reckless indeed who tries to decide a question of truth or rightness by impulse, desire, or public opinion. These are not laboratory tests. You will find all about them in the Bible, too, and see that they are not dependable. We have to have more precise measurements than they afford.

When a viewpoint, a position, or a course of action is to be decided on, one should consult authorities that have been found reliable by experience, the accumulated wisdom of the ages, the conclusions of sound reason, the guidance of instructed conscience, and the experience of mankind. These all appear in the Bible, the last mentioned being the laboratory test.

How did things go with Abraham when he accepted the less desirable grazing lands of Canaan and did his best with them, and how did they go with Lot who chose the most fertile of the Jordan Plains and pitched his tent toward Sodom? How did they go with David who dealt justly with Saul who was dealing very unjustly with him? And how did it go with him later when he was causing Uriah to be destroyed so he might take his wife? How did they go with Matthew when he sacrificed material gain to be a disciple, and how did they go with Judas who became a disciple but found he could not get material gain off his mind?

The Bible will tell you all this honestly. It will also give you many more case histories showing how this attitude or that course of action worked out in the crucible of experience, in the results of the laboratory test.

It is well to know how others made out in the stages of progress before we came, especially to know how much better they did who recognized their own insufficiency enough not to attempt the hard places, not even when they looked easy, by their own strength and wisdom, but who chose to follow the leading of God whose pillars of cloud and fire are both sure and available.

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PART III - ALONG THE WAY

A LONG any road lie traces of those who have passed that way. One finds discarded baggage, pieces of wreckage, monuments and markers, signs of success, remains of failure - all remindful of how well or poorly some traveler did who came that way earlier.

The same is true of the road each of us took to here, and will be of any road by which we move on. If we learn by experience, the signs of failure and ruin should grow fewer, and those of happiness and success more frequent. It is not as much so, however, as one might expect. In spite of all the experience people have had with them, we still tend to go through the same old cycles.

We need to free ourselves from the tendencies that caused the mistakes of the past. Greece, Rome, Nineveh, Tyre, Egypt, Babylonia, even Israel - all represented in the pages of the Bible - were wrecked on rocks well known in history. Yet dictators still rise, aggressors still dream they can succeed, glory and gold still intoxicate people, and it still seems easier not to bother than to try to make the best of one's life. Some day we shall learn better, of course; but how long is it going to take? It depends on when we shall learn and apply the lessons taught us by the past, largely with the help of the Bible.

Two aspects of this matter we should realize. One is that there is an often unnoticed current moving in the stream of history. It is the power of what someone has called "the terrible meek". Many of the plain and unpretentious good may not even know it, but they really hold the balance of power. One day they will assert themselves, and when they do there will be peace, right will make might, and the ambition of each will be to find his good in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. If you want to march in the victorious column, this is it.

The other reassuring current in the onward sweep of life is one that does not

move straight ahead. It turns, and changes, and goes now in one way and now in another, marshalling forces, changing trends, adjusting situations, urging one element forward, holding another back, changing trends, and finding ways even to make faltering individuals and unpromising conditions contribute to the general forward movement of all. It is again the brooding, loving, hovering, moving, controlling, directing, creative, Spirit of God. When it has finished with one chaos it moves on to another, and its current chaos is that of mistaken, confused, futile, human living. We need not fear for the outcome. Divine power always succeeds. Order will come.

Onward we go in the meantime, making history for our own lives and that of our generation. We do it better as we take example or warning as the case may be, from the experience of those who have dreamed, hoped, tried, and labored before we arrived on the scene.

Let us not forget that now and then in future years someone will pass this way and see the reminders of victory or defeat we have left along the road by our success or our failure in traveling in the light of what others have paid the price to learn before us.

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PART IV - SOME LAWS OF LIFE

LOOKING over the long list of case histories in the Bible we can make out certain tendencies of life and laws of life which it will be well to pause here and there to ponder and see what they have to suggest for our own guidance as we carve out our own parts of the world's present and future, and our own personal destinies as parts of them.

One is that while we go forward in discovery, invention, progress, and culture, we go around in circles with regard to customs and habits. We constantly take up old ways of life that have been found wanting and discarded; and instead of taking warning from their failures, we pluck them out of the dust of the past and reintroduce them as something new and progressive. All that is really new and progressive in human customs will be found at higher levels than any yet traveled. The spiritual principle governing this is found in St. Paul's well-tested instruction,

"BE NOT CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD, BUT BE YE TRANSFORMED
THROUGH THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND."

Another determining law is that so far man has not learned how to manage prosperity. This is because of his strong tendency to let the material dominate the spiritual, which he must learn to reverse. As long as an individual or a people remains poor, idealism rules in the hope of bettering the condition. But we all know too well when the day of plenty brings idleness and self-indulgence, how quickly they lead to collapse. How grandly the Bible principle of seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness can change that!

Another evident law is that progress is not a matter of movement but of direction. Before one cries exultantly, "See how fast we are going", he should look carefully to see in which direction this rapid motion is taking us. The faster we

travel away from a goal the sooner fades our hope of ever reaching it. People sometimes try to prove that we are growing up by the juvenile things we do. We are progressing only in the measure in which we are doing better, setting and meeting higher standards. Compromise and surrender are not progress, but the contrary. Change is desirable only when it is for the better.

Still another law is that the way forward is easier to go than any other. Who ever saw a detour as good as the main highway? It takes effort to go wrong, the road is never so good, and the results are always profitless or worse. Going forward the traveler has the best company, he is not throwing away his effort, he has all the experience of the past in his favor, and the guiding hand of God in history is working with him and for him.

As you study the countless case histories in the Holy Book you can see other significant principles and tendencies that will help you the better to work out your destiny. The point in them all is that the only ultimate safety and success are in truth which is right in principle and right which is Truth in practice. The Spirit of God has made every effort to make the way plain.

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PART V - HISTORY PLAYS ITS PART

ALL this should teach us to have great respect for history, which means to have great respect for the past. The past is the foundation of the present. We can no more discard it than we can do without the foundation under a building or the stairway by which we reach the second floor.

A nation without a past would have nothing on which to build a future. A person who disregards the yesterdays remains forever in his childhood. All we have learned on the road behind us needs to be remembered because we shall have use for it again and again along the road ahead. It is valuable, too, for its own sake. Most of it is vivid, some of it is heroic, and all of it is significant.

We have not reached and cannot reach such a stage of self-sufficiency that we can afford to scorn the lessons of the past. When we try to excuse our deviations from right by claiming that times have changed, we only declare our own rashness and lack of discernment. Times sometimes change because the unthinking change them, but the laws of life and the principles of progress go on and on. Only sound advancement is worthy to be recognized as progress.

The recorded thought of the ages has been cumulative. It began with the simplest ideas and records in picture writing and built up to the vast literature of today. But the earliest writings we have are as important as the newest, because they are all a part of the same priceless treasure of human thought and experience. How often some ancient writing alone unlocks some problem of the present!

The Bible gives us a view of the beginnings of forces in history which we can find nowhere else. It gives us early accounts of principles by which our lives are governed today. Whereas secular history is written to inform, Bible history is written to reveal and instruct. It warns, inspires, and guides. When we fail to

make use of it we throw away chart and compass and set out to sail by guess and impulse.

Sir Arthur Bryant has said that history is the key to a nation's future as well as its past, that the nation that loses its history has no future, and that, though we cannot recreate the past, we cannot escape it. That is just as true for any one of us as individuals as it is for a nation. The laws that have been operative in the lives of people before us are operative in our lives also.

Our todays rest on our yesterdays as new layers of stone rest on those laid before them. On what others have done we and those who come after us must build. By the labor of earlier workers our efforts are affected, and by what they learned we must profit. Who can build well on a foundation at which he has not even looked?

History is the unfolding drama of human life. The prologue, or the acts and scenes already finished may not seem as thrilling as the portions now being played; but they are important, for they are not only parts of the same production but we can learn from the skill or lack of skill shown by those who have enacted the earlier scenes.

Not to learn from history is not only making a negative choice. It is also leaving some of earth's richest wisdom ungathered, and much of it in the Bible which throws on the past a light of which secular history has not always taken note.

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PART VI - THE NATURE OF PROGRESS

NOTHING we have said rules out change, its possibility, its necessity, or its value. We must have it, and do; but we must see to it that it is change for the better and not merely for the sake of variety. The experience of the past is not something to rest on but to build on. It challenges us to take the principles of truth and right it presents and use them in doing something not only different, but better, for as has often been said, in a state of progress we must always do better in order to do as well. We never stand still; if we do not go forward we go backward.

Here we are on the road from savagery to the day of the sons of God, from chaos to the heavenly city, from the beginnings of life to its maturity, from the status of a higher animal to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. This is our pageant of progress.

We must keep taking our bearings to see that we are moving in the right direction, checking our landmarks to see that we have not strayed from the way, and testing our progress to be sure we are always improving on past performances. We must do all this in the spirit and by the principles of the experience mankind has found to be safe, dependable, and good.



The Bible offers us this counsel. It is a dynamic Book, one of challenge, one that has grown out of the inward and onward struggle of the human spirit. Some have and some have not worked by right methods. It shows us which was which, so we need not make the old mistakes again or fail to know the right patterns of character and endeavor to choose.

Astronomers and astrophysicists feel certain that the physical universe is expanding. However that may be, the purposes of God for us and life are surely doing so. They are expanding toward maturity and fulfillment as a flower blooms, a tree grows, or planted and tended seeds develop into a harvest.

The picture of the new world life in the Twenty-first and Twenty-second chapters of Revelation tells us in symbol what that life will be, but by the symbols shown we can see that it will be life at its best, built, participated in, and maintained by man at his best, the life of a race that has fully accepted and adapted itself to the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

The road to now has been long, partly because we have made the march so haltingly and uncertainly. The distance still appears great, but there are signs that we may be moving toward the goal more swiftly than we have realized. Who knows what day there may come a great break-through? One way that could happen would be by more people doing the will of God more devotedly. That includes each, any, and all of us as we move on up the King's Highway, using the lessons of the past to build a still better future. How far it is from the first Chapter of Genesis to the Last Chapter of Revelation depends on that - and us.

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PART VII - PROVE ALL THINGS

IN his monumental list of recommendations for living in the Fifth Chapter of First Thessalonians one of St. Paul's wise and profound suggestions is this, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." This is a sound and solid bit of counsel for proceeding with the living of a successful and satisfying life. It relates itself directly to the use of the past in building new experience in the opportune present and the promising future.

The Bible is a Book of theory, but it is also a Book of example. It is rich in instruction, but its instruction is thoroughly supported by demonstration. It is a Book of reason, but it is also a Book of proof. That means that you do not have to rely on the costly trial and error process in your most serious problems. It has been done for you, and the results are on record. A pharmacist's formula book saves a great deal of error because the errors have already been made and corrected. Its compounds are dependable because they have been tried and the risks already taken. The same is true of the Bible as a formula Book for living.

No one needs to be afraid to trust it. Like the laws of chemical compounds, the laws of life have not changed. People may think and do differently, but the compounding of the elements of life will still produce the same results.

Both in consulting the case histories in the Bible and in the efforts we make to conform to them the latter part of Paul's instruction is the enriching one. Holding fast to what we and others have tested and found good is what really rewards us. It is like sorting the real currency from a heap of mingled good and counterfeit money. When the process is done we have what is really valuable and need not be worried and encumbered with the rest. Thus we are double gainers, even more so when it is the real and abiding life qualities and values we have sorted from the deceptive and temporary ones.

Some people, even when older, shrink from living in earnest because they have acquired the false idea that it may be boring. How mistaken they are, and how costly is the mistake they make! What can be more boring than failure, more monotonous than always missing the point, and more costly and discouraging than always losing? On the other hand, what can make life more interesting than success and progress in the things that count, in the gaining of the qualities and satisfactions that make the days rewarding and worthwhile?

We know some things are not worth trying because others have tried them with negative results. If the motive and process were essentially good, it might be worthwhile to try again. If not, forget it. The laws of life have not changed, and if you go against them you will do no better than before. If you must try new things, try those that are based on something really promising. If you have made a mistake, or ever do make one, don't let it stop you. Let it go, and try something better. Save the wheat and forget the chaff. There will always be enough worthwhile opportunities that you can make a new start.

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AFFIRMATION

I look back over the long track of the traveled past and see that God has always walked with His children. I purpose to recognize His companionship and avail myself of His help and guidance.



I urge you, dear Student and Centurion, to memorize the above affirmation and use it daily for two weeks. Start your day with it, say it when you wake in the morning and the last thing before you close your eyes at night.

At the end of two weeks, I would like to hear from you as to the helpfulness of this practice in your daily life.

May God bless you,

YOUR CLASS INSTRUCTOR

